

## **Minutes of Meeting of the Management Committee of Orkney Housing Association Limited held remotely via Zoom on Wednesday 26 May 2021 at 10.30am**

- Present:** Fiona Lettice (Chair), Wendy Baikie, Dave Dawson, Linda Forbes, John White and Roella Wilson
- In attendance:** Craig Spence (Chief Executive – CE)  
Sandy Dennison (Finance Manager – FM)  
Richard Flett (Development & Properties Manager – DPM)  
Paul Scott (Head of Housing & Customer Services – HHCS)  
Mhairi Hughes (Secretary / Head of Corporate Governance – HCG)  
Connie Shearer (Minute Taker)

### **PART 1 – STANDING ITEMS**

#### **1.1 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Philip Cook, John Rodwell, Jason Taylor, Bill Wallace and Anne Fletcher.

#### **1.2 Declarations of (a) interest and (b) hospitality given/received in last 12 months for any items on the agenda**

None were received.

#### **1.3 Minutes of the Management Committee meeting 31 March 2021**

The word 'suggestion' in paragraph D.2 should be removed to read "A member suggested a briefing on ...". With this change, the Minutes were agreed to be an accurate record of the meeting and were proposed by Linda Forbes and seconded by John White. The Minute to be signed by the Chair at a later date.

#### **1.4 Matters Arising & Deferred Items (Paper No MC/21/01)**

1.4.1 Members noted the content of the Paper which was for information only.

#### **1.5 Future Meeting Dates:**

Wednesday 30 June, 10.00am – SGM re Rules – tbc Agenda Item G3  
Wednesday 30 June, 10.30am – Management Committee (5YFP/ Loan portfolio)  
Wednesday 28 July, 10.30am – Management Committee

### **PART 2 – STRATEGY**

#### **S1 Lettings Plan (Paper No MC/21/02)**

S1.1 The HCCS presented a comprehensive report, giving background information and statistics to enable members to agree a Lettings Plan for the remainder of 2021/22. An on-screen Powerpoint demonstration with visual charts was also

presented. These showed important allocation statistics such as homelessness figures, waiting lists, property types & sizes, area preferences, all of which highlighted the importance of reviewing the current Lettings Plan. In line with current Scottish Government guidance, OHAL empty properties are offered to OIC for homeless households in the first instance.

S1.2 The Association anticipates the completion of 20 rented properties during 2021-22 and the HHCS would like to allocate these properties to existing OHAL tenants in the first instance via a local lettings initiative. This will create 20 void properties but will, ultimately, meet the housing needs of 40 households.

S1.3 Members had a constructive, positive and lengthy discussion, including:

- Scale of development programme by OIC/OHAL versus demand;
- Perception that homeless people 'jump' the queue;
- Concern that all OHAL properties are offered to OIC homeless in the first instance and the consequential impact on our existing tenants/applicants;
- Increase in waiting list partly due to the way homes are allocated;
- Kirkwall centric nature of waiting list (9/10 first choice is Kirkwall);
- Lack of interest in rural areas from OIC homeless applicants when local amenities are plentiful and Kirkwall less than 15 miles away – why, if people are homeless;
- Lack of support services generally in rural areas – it is not just homeless who have issues;
- As the majority of the Orcadian population live outside Kirkwall, if there is a lack of support services, this should be looked at holistically;
- OIC should offer homeless applicants properties in areas out with Kirkwall, that meet their housing and support needs.

S1.4 Following discussion, members agreed:

- a) with Option 1 as detailed in the paper; and
- b) To delegate authority to the HHCS to discuss with OIC the two options set out at 4.2 in the paper, and upon completion modify the Rented Allocations Policy as required. The HHCS will report back to members at the earliest opportunity.

## **PART 3 – GOVERNANCE & ASSURANCE**

### **G1 SHR Self-Assessment Update (Paper No MC/21/03)**

G1.1 The HCG reported that the main change was regarding Equalities, with guidance from the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA) due to be finalised shortly. However, training for members and staff had already taken place and the HCG is undertaking Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Ambassador training being delivered by SFHA.

G1.2 A member enquired about the Evidence Bank and the HCG said this would be updated on members' pen drives once they were returned – she will email a reminder to members.

### G1.3 Members:

- a) Agreed that no material changes are required to the AAS since its submission;
- b) Noted that no Notifiable Events have occurred or been reported to the SHR since the last meeting;
- c) Noted the amendments to the list of Governance Related Policies;
- d) Noted the Regulatory Requirements Evidence Bank additions and update regarding Equalities as per Section 5;
- e) Noted the Regulatory Standards Evidence Bank additions per Section 6; and
- f) Noted the COVID-19 Evidence Bank additions as per Section 7.

## **G2 Approval of Annual Return on the Charter 2020-21 (Paper No MC/21/04)**

G2.1 The DPM and HCCS went over some of their figures in the Return and members noted that, although some figures were down on the previous year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there were a number of 'good news' results. Notably:

- The average time taken to complete emergency repairs has reduced from 2.06 hrs to 1.84 hrs.
- The average time taken to complete non-emergency repairs increased by 5.29 days, attributable to the pandemic.
- There was an increase of only 1.32 days to re-let properties (average of 8.11 days against a KPI of 13 days), of which there were 53 during the year.
- In part, due to the hard work of the Housing & Customer Services staff targeting and supporting tenants, the gross rent arrears reduced from 5.08% as at 31 March 2020 to 3.9% as at 31 March 2021.
- Rents increased by only 1.1% this year, against 2.4% last year – the lowest percentage increase in over 20 years.

G2.2 A member queried why figures relating to Tenant Satisfaction were the same as the previous year. The HHCS explained that the data was gathered from a Tenant Satisfaction Survey which is valid for three years, or until another survey is undertaken, hence the same figures.

G2.3 Following brief discussion, members authorised the Chief Executive to submit the Return to the SHR.

## **G3 Approval of new Rules (Paper No MC/21/05)**

G3.1 The HCG went over the background to the paper, explaining the necessity to adopt new Rules to comply with the Scottish Housing Regulator's (SHR) Regulatory Framework for Registered Social Landlords. The report detailed the benefits and risks associated with the proposed changes, which include:

- To prohibit the appointment of related Committee Members.
- To allow payment to Committee Members (if members were to choose to do so in the future); and
- To allow virtual attendance at General meetings.

G3.2 She outlined the process required and recommended holding a Special General Meeting for the new Rules to be adopted.

G3.3 Members agreed that it is in the interests of the Association to adopt these rules as contained in Attachment 1 to the paper, to ensure compliance with the SHR's Regulatory Requirements.

Members also agreed to hold a Special General Meeting as detailed in Section 7.4 of the paper.

#### **G4 Policy & Reviews (Paper No MC/21/06)**

G4.1 The HCG said many of the policies presented were inter-linked and went through these, detailing the changes, and responded to a query regarding abbreviations used in the Scheme of Delegations.

G4.2 The HCCS talked members through the Tenant Participation Strategy Feedback which had received 56 responses. The Resident Panel and OIC Housing Services were also consulted which led to 2 changes being suggested to the TP Strategy.

G4.3 Members:

- a) Approved the reinstatement of Appendix 5 to the Complaints Handling Procedure as detailed in Section 2 of the paper;
- b) Approved the amendments to the Data Protection & Privacy Policy as at Attachment 1 of the paper;
- c) Approved the revised Committee Code of Conduct as per Attachment 2 of the paper;
- d) Approved the Supporting Guidance to the Code of Conduct for Committee Members as at Attachment 3 of the paper;
- e) Approved the Protocol on Dealing with an Alleged Breach of the Code as at Attachment 4 of the paper;
- f) Approved the revised Staff Code of Conduct as per Attachment 5 of the paper;
- g) Approved the addition of Section 8 to Appendix 1 of the Scheme of Delegations as presented in Attachment 6 of the paper;
- h) Approved the amendments to the Entitlements, Payments & Benefits Policy as detailed in Attachment 7 of the paper; and
- i) Approved the amended Tenant Participation Strategy detailed in Attachment 8 of the paper, following the recent consultation.

#### **G5 Annual Governance Report (Paper No MC/21/07)**

G5.1 Members noted the contents of the Annual Governance Report.

**G6 Performance & Resources Annual Report** (Paper No MC/21/08)

G6.1 Members noted the Annual Report from the Performance & Resources Sub-committee.

**G7 Audit & Risk Management Report** (Paper No MC/21/09)

G7.1 Members noted the update and record of decisions from the Audit and Risk Management Sub-committee.

**G8 Audit & Risk Management Annual Report** (Paper No MC/21/10)

G8.1 Members noted the Annual Report from the Audit & Risk Management Sub-committee.

**G9 Legal Services Tender** (Paper No MC/21/11)

G9.1 Following discussion, members noted:

- a) Leadership Team agreed to an internal audit recommendation to hold a tender exercise for the formal appointment of the Association's solicitor.
- b) The tender exercise has now been carried out and the contract will be awarded to the highest scoring firm.

**G10 Resolutions & Applications for Membership** (Paper No MC/21/12)

G10.1 Members approved the resolution in respect of one shared ownership disposal.

**P1 Business Plan & Risk Management Report** (Paper No MC/21/13)

P1.1 The CE summarised the report which detailed achievement against Business Plan targets and the risk position during the year and at the year-end. Both P&R and ARM sub committees had already scrutinised some of the detail presented in the attachments. He was pleased to report positive outcomes, particularly regarding the exceptional KPI statistics for Housing and Properties.

P1.2 The risk of Cyber attacks increased over the year due to staff working from home, but action was taken to minimise this, with staff awareness sessions and training regularly undertaken. The HCG was pleased to report that the accreditation had been received for Cyber Essentials Plus, which increases security, following an audit on 12 April.

P1.3 Members noted the contents of this paper which provided assurance of effective management of organisational performance and risks during 2020/21.

## **P2 Complaints & Compliments Report (Paper No MC/21/14)**

- P2.1 The HCG said gardens and grounds maintenance continue to receive the most complaints but the number is minimal in comparison to the total number of cuts undertaken during the year, Housing & Customer Services staff continue to liaise closely with contractors on this. She was pleased to report the high number of compliments received by OHAL's Trades Team. A member enquired about a % figure in the table at 2.1 – in the final column, Stage 1, the figures should read" 35% (54%)".
- P2.2 Members noted the contents of the report.

## **P3 Development Report (Paper No MC/21/15)**

- P3.1 The DPM confirmed that the projects on site were progressing, though slightly behind due to weather/labour. He was pleased to report a suitable grant offer had been received for an additional 8 units at Walliwall 7, with finance now coming from cash reserves. Any future developments would require new loan funding. Responding to a query on grant spend target, the DPM confirmed that OHAL had exceeded its target by £3k.
- P3.2 The CE said a positive news release will be going out highlighting the new development works going to local contractors and the fact that, in a 12 month period, almost £9m worth of tenders have been awarded locally which is quite exceptional.
- P3.3 Following brief discussion, members:
- a) noted the current position with the development programme;
  - b) noted the position of the Walliwall Phase 7 project; and
  - c) granted authority to the Development & Properties Manager (or the Chief Executive in his absence) to accept the tender for 8 rented units at Walliwall Phase 7 and sign all relevant associated documentation.

## **P4 Contractors & Consultants Annual Review (Paper No MC/21/16)**

- P4.1 A member enquired about using contractors and the Register of Interest. The CE confirmed the financial levels as per the EPB and the HCG said the list of contractors is updated regularly and sent out to members and staff.
- P4.2 Members then:
- a) noted the annual performance figures for our Maintenance Contractors in Attachment 1;
  - b) noted that any member with an interest in any of the companies on any of lists given in Attachments 2, 3 and 4 of the paper must declare so in the Register of Interests in accordance with the Entitlements, Payments and Benefits Policy;
  - c) approved the List of Maintenance Contractors given in Attachment 2;

- d) approved the List of Development Contractors given in Attachment 3; and
- e) approved the List of Development Consultants given in Attachment 4.

## **P5 Report from Health & Safety Working Party (Paper No MC/21/17)**

P5.1 The HCG's report on the recent Health & Safety Working Party meeting detailed updates to the Health & Safety Control Manual; progress on recommendations from the Audit of Health & Safety Management System; monthly housekeeping & safety inspections; accident reports; and risk assessments.

P5.2 Responding to a query regarding members liability, the CE said that it was the responsibility of the LT to ensure compliance with guidance. So long as members act honestly and in good faith in all that they do, should there be any major accident it would be the CE, as Senior Executive Officer, who carries full operational responsibility.

He suggested this would be a good topic for discussion at an upcoming MC training session regarding Roles & Responsibilities.

P5.3 Members:

- a) approved the updates to the Health & Safety Manual as detailed in Section 2 and in Attachment 1 of the paper; and
- b) noted the contents of the annual Workshop Inspection Report as detailed in Attachment 2 of the paper.

## **PART 5 – ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

None.

## **PART 6 – ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

### **I1 Welfare Reform Update (Paper No MC/21/18 enclosed)**

I1.1 The HCCS explained there had been little change from previous reports and updated members on the current situation. Replying to a query, he confirmed that, despite initial reservations, tenants had mainly responded positively to having to use IT systems. Housing Officers help in various ways and have IT equipment which they can use whilst in tenants' homes, when this is permitted.

I1.2 Members noted the content of this paper and the WR Mitigation Plan.

### **I2 Deferred Papers (Paper No MC/21/19 enclosed)**

I2.1 The FM explained the reasons for deferring the 2 papers, and following discussion, members agreed to hold a dedicated meeting in June to approve the Loan Portfolio Submission and 5 Year Financial Projection Return, to enable them to be submitted in compliance with SHR timescales.

*All staff, apart from the CE and HCG, left the meeting.*

**I3 Staffing Update** (Paper No MC/21/20 enclosed)

**I3.1** Members noted the content of the paper which was for information only.

The meeting ended at 13.10.

Signed: .....

Date: .....

Chair